

verdadera

INFLUENCE MARCH 2012

The Verdadera staff encourages you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression, but to improve our lives. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Who or what influences you the most? Is it a healthy influence?
- Do you have an influence on others?
- How have people and events shaped who you are?

STUDENT SUBMISSIONS

When I think about influence, a few things come into my mind. Media influence, foreign influence, peer influence, parental influence. The two that I'd like to share with you are peer and parental influence. Now, you always see anti drug and alcohol commercials with the slogan "Live above the influence". But I am living above the influence; above the influence of this particular media. I'm not advocating for everybody to go out and do a bunch of drugs and drink a bunch of liquor. But I am advocating that people should know their limits and boundaries, and what they're comfortable with: they shouldn't adhere to the comfort limits that others dictate. I do party occasionally, and though I'd like to say it was largely my own decision and not peer influence, I will admit that they did play some role. But I don't do it all the time, sometimes I watch over my friends or stay sober to drive people home. I know that you don't need illegal substances to have a good time, but I don't look to be roaring drunk when I go out. I know the consequences. Do people flame adults for socially drinking? I know most teens don't have that self control, but believe it or not

some do. And I'm not a bad person and I don't believe that one of my "bad group of friends" influences my academics at all: I am a straight A student who received a GPA greater than 4.0 last semester and I am highly active in school activities. I think my ability to stand by the lines I draw for myself against other people's influences is my parent's influence in my thought process. They tell me, "You know what you're doing is right or wrong. We can't watch over you all the time, but you are strong enough to take care of yourself because we know you're a smart and good kid. Stay safe, study hard, and be happy." And I've grown up with that sentiment of work hard, play hard thanks to my parent's influence. Though some people frown upon partying, I'm happy with my balance of academic success and busy social life. Did I mention I sleep before 11:30 every night as a Junior? I'm a very happy person and I can hope that people realize "living above the influence" in terms of alcohol and drugs doesn't necessarily make you a better or happier person. Knowing your personal boundaries and sticking to your own personal principles is, no matter the number of haters.

“Movies can and do have tremendous influence in shaping young lives in the realm of entertainment towards the ideals and objectives of normal adulthood.”

—Walt Disney

What is Influence? Is it the devil on your shoulders whispering to seek your deepest and darkest desires? What is Influence? Is it that invisible push that edges you ever so slightly forward towards your ambition and dreams? What is Influence? Is it the ageless entity that erodes all previous behavior to churn out a new persona? What is Influence?

“You can never really live anyone else's life, not even your child's. The influence you exert is through your own life, and what you've become yourself.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

The question about influence isn't whether it exists or not. It's about whether it's good or bad. Everyone has been influenced by something at one point, and it develops them into the people they are. For me personally, I was influenced by my father's big part in my life, as he was the one who always took me places and hung out with me. I like to think that because of him, it's why I turned out so rough and tough. But I've also been influenced by him negatively, carrying on the temperament our family has. Even now, I struggle with trying to not get angry too quickly or often. I mean, as a guy, people think that you're “supposed” to be like that, but I don't really think that trying to prove you're all manly and strong by snapping at everyone is the right way to go. So yeah, influence is definitely a big factor in your life, but you can resist it some as well. Ever since I consciously made an effort to stop being so annoyed and irritated by everything, I've definitely toned my temper down a lot!

“Think twice before you speak, because your words and influence will plant the seed of either success or failure in the mind of another.”

—Napoleon Hill

When I was younger, my parents would always tell me not to give in to the peer pressure of taking drugs or drinking alcohol. What they forgot to mention was the amount of peer pressure I'd face to not be a failure. That's supposed to be a good thing, striving to be and do your best. But what happens when your best isn't enough? I'm supposedly an average student, but I feel like a failure. The “influence” or peer pressure at Monta Vista is tremendous. Getting an A- is hardly tolerable for most people, and I'm barely getting B's. I try so hard, and I get a B while people I know who hardly try at all get A's on everything and they still aren't satisfied. I know I shouldn't compare myself to them, but it's hard not to when that's anything and everything you hear. Other kids might be suffering from the pressure to fit in and do drugs, but I'm just trying to cope with not being good enough.

“My Father had a profound influence on me. He was a lunatic.”

— Spike Milligan

Environment is one of the biggest influences in our lives. People are always complaining that if they lived somewhere else and went to a different school, it would be much easier to be at the top of the class and therefore have a higher chance of being accepted at colleges. Perhaps that would be the case if someone were to transfer out of Monta Vista before junior year, but living and growing up somewhere else entirely? That's a different story. In Cupertino, most of us haven't had a whole lot of experience with sex, drugs, and violence whereas people living a couple miles south have witnessed and experienced such things in their school at least

once every week. We have lived sheltered lives, the biggest of our concerns being the high expectations of our parents and getting accepted by our favorite college. Most of our lives revolve around grades, extracurricular classes, and test scores, and that's mainly because of where we live. I bet if we had grown up somewhere else instead like downtown San Jose, it would have been more likely for us to become a drug addict than a 4.0 GPA honor student.

"Picasso once remarked I do not care who it is that has or does influence me as long as it is not myself."
—Gertrude Stein

It's 7:30 p.m. and as the clouds part over the city of Cupertino, a heavenly choir sings. The harpist strums oscillating cadenzas; the percussion picks up and an oboe plays the familiar melody that grows over upbeat pizzicato. We glide between the hills of the Silicon Valley, over the dust of Lehigh Cement Factory and down to suburbia. We stop at a medium size ranch-style home with two cars and freshly mowed grass — the show begins. My brother and I sprawled across our velvet blue sofa every night before dinner. We lived through our yellow doppelgangers, experiencing the same issues The Simpsons did: Bart joining the Junior Campers (and getting kicked out...but no matter how ridiculous the situation, before 8 o'clock, we could always rely on the credits to roll. The Simpsons isn't like Full House or any other sitcom; it was crude, like my family. Except for the episode where Homer had an affair with a co-worker; it left me disconcerted as a fifth grader, but Homer made up with Marge within 30 minutes, and I moved onto a new episode the next day because everything was okay — until it really did happen. The curious fifth grader I was opened an email on my dad's computer about a lunch meeting. I understood fully what had happened but I didn't tell anybody. Two years later my mom found out. Mrs. D was

dropping me off from a Blink 182 concert. It was a crisp California night and I could see each breath vaporize into the air, like the exhaust spewing from the car behind me. In front of me, I heard my mom's faint sobs. The car was still idling in the street. I asked my mom what was wrong and swept back to the car to let Mrs. D know that everything was okay. Mrs. D left, but everything wasn't okay. I stood from the street, turned around, and saw my house: warm light shone through windows onto a narrow path that lead to the lawn where a well-pruned Myrtle tree was stranded in a sea of crabgrass.

Life on Evergreen Terrace was simple; the writers summarized the episode in 14 words, "Homer's marriage is in trouble when he develops an attraction to a new co-worker". In reality, everything was falling apart yet uncontrollably layering in complication. Divorce would lead to selling our house, which in turn would mean moving between two apartments every week, seeing my dad on the weekends, and having to make new friends at a different school.

Those years of holding that secret ingrained into my head a pattern of internalizing that has become a part of who I am. It is part of me, and I own it because I'm not sure how this episode of my life has affected who I am today, just as much as I don't know how it will shape my future. But I do know that life's problems don't dissolve at the queueing of upbeat music and the rolling of credits. I do know that, just as Lisa showed me through her ambition, your hopes and dreams carry you from one episode to the next.

"The secret of my influence has always been that it remained secret."

—Salvador Dali

I hate it when my friend gets under the influence, well at least around me. I know I have to be a friend, but it f***ing annoys me how he always gets drunk in public. The other day, he got drunk outside

of verde(again) and started making a scene. i forced him into my car and had to drive him to my house. i wanted to drop his body off at the park but the park is where all the police go to at night when neighbors hear a ruckus.

so like usual, i bring him to my house and feed him food and water to get the s*** out of his system. after i feed him, he pukes on my carpet. the lesson to this story is, it's OK to be under the influence ,just don't do it in public and dont always rely on your friend to always watch after you and be your designated driver/mother. and if can't help yourself, at least show some gratefulness towards your friends who do watch after you when you have your booze days.

"Leadership is influence."

—John C. Maxwell

My dad heavily influences me. He drinks and swears and says crap about those he hates and I think I'm beginning to do the same. He always yells at me for having a "bad temper" when he himself is being a hypocrite because he has a bad temper. For example, last week he went into a screaming fit over how I ate his sandwich in the fridge even though I didn't know it was his. It was just an accident. Not like I came home and thought to myself "Today, I'm going to piss off my dad by eating his sandwich." But I admit, I do have a bad temper and people have told me this. But my dad shouldn't call me out on it since he is probably the one I got this personality from.

"Absences are a good influence in love and keep it bright and delicate."

—Robert Louis Stevenson

Equations. They ever so beautifully and elegantly model our world and predict the unpredictable.

I have been fascinated with mathematics for this very reason: the development of models that can tell us about the world around us and allow us to visualize what happens if a few inputs or

conditions are changed. Mankind has sought to see the future and control unpredictability; to see the "what if's before they happen and make their decisions with as much information as possible. The continuation of this pursuit is what has influenced and driven me to the study of mathematics. If we can consider what happens to a complex system based upon the values of an input, say perhaps what happens to our grade on tomorrow's examination based on the number of hours spent studying, we can find an ideal solution to our problem. People wonder all the time about the future; myself included. The colloquial Monta Vista dilemma - what if we had gone to the basketball game instead of studying for that test? Would we have had some amazing experience that would affect the rest of our lives? I wonder what might have happened if I had asked that girl to Homecoming; would we be dating now or would nothing have happened anyways? What might have happened if I had chosen to do a different competition in FBLA? These questions remain still unanswered, but mathematics can get us closer to the answer by giving us a clear lens of the universe.

"Well I had my kids so young that I kind of feel that I'm a kid too and am growing up with them. The things they're interested in tend to really influence me."

—Reese Witherspoon

Influenced? I think so. There's always something that influences you at one time or another, whether it be an actual role model (a relative, or close acquaintance like a teacher) or a character in one of your favorite shows (Matt Bommer comes to mind). Now what's great about influences is that a great many of them are not going to become your lifelong buddies. For example, I chose to dress like Neal Caffrey when I got to parties because it makes me feel sophisticated and awesome—the way my 30 year old self dresses is a whole other issue entirely. Another good example is in colloquial phrases and tones; after spending my summer in Austin, Texas, I had latched on

to my cousin's phrases like "Yeahhh, it's pretty crazy" and "Oh dear god". So in that way, I think influences can provide people and insight on their short-term personal history, highlighting exactly who and what you've been exposed to in the last couple of months. Yet, like almost everything in this world, there's always a downside to influences—the bad ones that stick. If you're not an isolated protected-in-a-bubble baby like me, then you probably know what I'm talking about. Even in school, they're those ghetto, shady ass people that are influenced to smoke, drink, and do drugs. Sadly, these are the kinds of influences that do make a permanent imprint (Jacob imprinted!) on your life. If you are stuck in one of those pressuring situations, get the heck out of there before you end up like Michael Jackson (a great example of a master artist destroyed by the terrors of this world). But I'm out of my place. No matter what influences there are, I don't believe in other people having the influence or power to tell you how to live your life, so let me back off a bit. I'll end with this, a quote from a fictional role model Jedi warrior dude: The darker the shadow, the brighter the light that casted it. Influences can be good or bad guys, but remember we can always choose the ones we want to represent our character. Damn I'm doing it again aren't I...?

"Neither a man nor a crowd nor a nation can be trusted to act humanely or to think sanely under the influence of a great fear."

—Bertrand Russell

From day 1 we are under the influence. It's how we as humans learn; we become influenced by external factors. Each and every one of us is a representation of society's influence on us. Don't you dare say people don't influence you because that's just bulls***. I've never met a single person who hasn't been influenced by someone else either positively or negatively. For example, take my hostility and

aggression in this submission, it's the direct result of the influence living with my antagonistic parents has had on me.

"Advertising reflects the mores of society, but it does not influence them."

—David Ogilvy

What kind of things influence us? More importantly, what or who do we influence? I think that it's really important to be reminded that our actions make impacts on other people. For example, in my sophomore year, I began partying and drinking. One of my friends was very against this kind of life style and used to tell me how bad it was. After a few months of continuing to hang out with me, she became numb to the negative effects of alcohol and decided to start partying as well. If I had never been a bad influence on her, she may have never changed her morals. Of course this is only an example of a bad influence. We can also be good influences. What kind of positive influences can you make? To what or who? I would argue that it doesn't just stop at influencing our friends. Our actions, decisions, thoughts can influence more than that. We can make an impact on our school, our community, even our nation! I just think it's important to stimulate the good influences you have made and attempt to suppress your bad influences.

"The most hateful human misfortune is for a wise man to have no influence."

—Herodotus

My biggest influence in my life is my father. We're a pretty wealthy family and it's all because of all the hard work he has done over the years even though he grew up dirt poor in Taiwan. Now he's the CEO of his own company and we literally make millions every year- I live a great life and all I want is to be just like him. By that I mean I want to be successful, but being as rich as he is would be

nice too. But his influence also has a bad side, I guess, because there is so much pressure for me to go into the same field he did and do really well. I want to be successful, but not just because I felt pressured into doing that.

"I came from a broken home, so my mom was a major influence in my life."

—Julius Erving

If you asked me if I was influenced by my friends to make the decisions I have, I would definitely reply, "No way! I think for myself! Just because they do stuff doesn't mean that that is the reason I do!" And of course I'd be offended. But really, I've only just realized how much I really am influenced by my friends. I wouldn't have done half the things I've done if it weren't for my friends pushing me, well not pushing me, but silently encouraging me to as well.

In middle school, I truly believed that I would never drink or smoke in high school. It was just such a silly idea! If it weren't for my friends getting into these kinds of things, or the "cool people" who did it as well, I really don't think I would have done either. I mean, I definitely wouldn't have done those things alone, so it's obvious that those ideas were spurred on by others. I've never felt real peer pressure, the kind in movies where you feel retarded if you don't follow what other people are doing. But I definitely did feel left out by not doing it.

I'm not saying I regret any of the decisions I've made; I've enjoyed what I've done, but I acknowledge the fact that my friends were a greater influence on my decision making than I thought before.

A WORD FROM THE PROFESSIONAL



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Students, are you tempted to cheat because so many around you are doing it? How stressful is it to feel that tension between the potential benefits of cheating and the lessons you've learned about being a person of integrity? Do you feel pressure to use drugs or alcohol because your friends are starting to do so? Do you ever think about using drugs or alcohol, or are you currently doing so, as a way to cope with the pressures in your life? Are you feeling anxious or depressed about your academic performance? When others take multiple honors and AP courses, are you afraid you aren't doing enough to ensure admission to a good college? Do you face significant parental pressure and expectations when it comes to grades and extra-curricular involvement? Are you feeling pressured to become sexually active before you are ready? Do your parents think you watch too much TV or spend too much time online? Do they question what kinds of programs you watch or what you are doing on Facebook? Do you ever worry that the pressures and influences you face or they impose get in the way of your having a warmer and more connected relationship with your parents?

Parents, do you find yourself worrying constantly about your child's academic performance and/or extra-curricular involvement? Do you stress about the influences and pressures your child faces at school every day? Do you fear that you haven't provided the proper influence your child needs to make intelligent and healthy decisions in life? Do you believe that the stricter you are in your parenting style, the more control over your

teen and potential risks he or she faces you'll be able to exert? Do the vast majority of your conversations with your teen center around academics and only that? When you hear other parents talking about their children's accomplishments and activities, do you

torment yourself that perhaps your kids aren't measuring up? Do you ever feel that the influences and pressures your kids face these days get in the way of good and healthy communication between you? Are you wishing you could have a closer relationship with your teenager?

Students and parents, being a teen or a parent of a teen nowadays is a daunting thing. What I try to do in my interactions with teens and their

parents when there is conflict is attempt to turn the adversarial conversation into a more empathic and connected one, a more elegant one.

Teens, here are some thoughts I have about influence that I'd like to invite you to consider and that I'd like to invite your parents to read and think about also:

- The stories and accompanying thoughts and feelings I read and heard in your submissions are real, legitimate, insightful, heartfelt and totally normal
- A big part of your task of growing up is establishing your own identity and deciding upon and clarifying your own values, and resolving to live according to them
- Some, perhaps a lot, of what your parents, teachers, coaches and other adults have taught you (how they influenced you) is good, sound and helpful, and you'll want to incorporate those life lessons into how you conduct your lives in the future
- It's possible, even probable, that some of what your

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resources for parents and teens

- Research on Adolescent Influences by the Rand Corporation: http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9068/index1.html
- Books by Dr. Mike Riera: <http://www.mikeriera.com/books.html>
- The Adolescent Journey by Marsha Levy Warren, Ph.D.

parents and other adults have taught or modeled for you is flawed in some way (perhaps they smoke, drink, swear, lose their tempers, speak disrespectfully to you, etc.), and you are now mature enough and in a position to think critically about that

- While you may feel as though you are not free now to decide for yourself which of your parents' or others' influences you wish to keep and which you wish to discard, the time will come sooner or later for you to do just that - keep what is good and helpful and discard what is not

- There is research that indicates that what you watch on TV might influence you negatively - try to be conscious, aware and savvy media consumers

- Every generation teens watch TV programs or listen to music that parents find objectionable, so while you are going to watch what teens watch, be aware that a lot of the very overt sexual and drug/alcohol content of programming is scary for today's parents; they are likely to have a knee-jerk reaction

- Integrity, "doing the right thing" and good values aren't dead; as one of the students remarked in his/her submission, you are in a position to choose what kind of person you want to be; people rise "above the influence" all the time

- Be open to conversations with your parents about topics that are not so comfortable; perhaps after they read some of this, some of them will be in a more receptive place to listen to your thoughts and feelings and point of view

Parents, here are some thoughts I have about

parenting and influence which I'd like to invite you to examine and which I'd encourage your teens to read as well:

- I would encourage you to think about your parenting style and whether or not it promotes connection and good communication with your teen; too strict and too permissive don't work

- A balance needs to be found between "firm edge" and "soft touch" parenting practices; not always an easy task but an important one - there are times to set limits, there are times to be more tolerant, patient and compassionate

- Your parents probably didn't like your music and what you wanted to watch on TV; while I agree that there is some alarming content on TV these days, I would urge you to be less reactive and more open to talking to your teen about what he/she watches - a great conversation might pop out

- Generally speaking, low emotional reactivity results in greater creativity in our communications with our teens - if we go to the "because I said so" place, we are probably going to lose a valuable opportunity for dialogue

- And remember, "Adolescents are not monsters. They are just people trying to learn how to make it among the adults in the world, who are probably not so sure themselves" (Virginia Satir). Be patient, learn about adolescent development, remember what it was like for you to be a teenager, try to listen more and ask questions instead of feeling as though you have to be right.

2011-2012 ISSUES

AUGUST body image

SEPTEMBER letting go, moving on

OCTOBER competition & academic stress

NOVEMBER morals & values

JANUARY purpose in life

FEBRUARY betrayal

MARCH media influence

APRIL sexual identity

MAY encouragement

JUNE innocence and maturity